



The Salisbury Planning Board held its regular meeting Tuesday, December 11, 2007, in the City Council Chamber of the Salisbury City Hall at 4 p.m. with the following being present and absent:

**PRESENT:** Karen Alexander, Robert Cockerl, Richard Huffman, Craig Neuhardt, Jeff Smith, Valerie Stewart, Albert Stout, and Diane Young

**ABSENT:** Dr. Mark Beymer, Tommy Hairston, Sandy Reitz, and Price Wagoner

**STAFF:** Preston Mitchell, Diana Moghrabi, and David Phillips

Diane Young, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order and offered an invocation. The minutes of the November 27, 2007, meeting were approved as submitted. The Planning Board adopted the agenda as submitted. Ms. Young explained the courtesy hearing procedures.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. Group Developments**

**G-10-98 Villas at Crescent**  
Laurel Valley Way & Spyglass Hill  
Tax Map 326, Parcel 257, Zoning RDA

Mr. Chuck Harris of Fisher-Harris Development submitted the application of a previously approved group development due to minor site modifications and time expiration. All zoning criteria have been met. The Technical Review Committee recommends approval of the application as submitted.

David Phillips made a staff presentation. The developer previously received approval of the 33-unit condominium development. When it was resubmitted, the TRC found that the cul-de-sac had to be changed to meet the fire code. A 3-unit building was then altered to a 2-unit building. TRC did not want to re-approve something that was inconsistent with the construction drawings so new drawings were submitted.

There was no discussion or comments from the public.

Jeff Smith made a MOTION to approve G-10-98. Albert Stout seconded the motion with all members voting AYE. (8-0)

This item is on the City Council Consent Agenda for December 18, 2007, at 4 p.m. in the Council Chamber.

## COMMITTEES

### A. Legislative Committee A—T-01-07/Signs

(Valerie Stewart, Chair; Jeff Smith, Mark Beymer, Robert Cockerl, Karen Alexander, and Richard Huffman) The committee met Thursday, November 29, at noon, at the hospital. The case began in May (See May 8, July 24, August 14, 2007, minutes available on the Web <http://www.salisburync.gov/lm&d/pb/pboard.html>) and included five amendments to the sign ordinance. The Planning Board has acted on three of these items and they have been adopted by City Council. This left two items—non-conforming signs will be addressed after the proposed Land Development Ordinance is adopted (if it is adopted), and today Planning Board will address the electronic sign issue.

The Committee voted 3-1 to recommend that no action be taken on electronic signs until after 2009 when the Federal Highway Administration and ASHTO (American Association of State Highway and Transportation) studies on safety related to electronic signs and electronic billboards come out. Valarie Stewart believes that waiting for the outcome of the studies will allow Planning Board to make an informed decision. Planning Board and the Community Appearance Commission (CAC) have had discussions on how this request could be expanded from school use to retail/business use.

Dick Huffman opposes the use of electronic signs. Intuitively, they do seem to be a distraction on highways—certainly with the bright red lettering that changes. There is no study that says they create a safety hazard. He also has concerns about general aesthetics. Is this what we want our city to look like? Every business on Innes Street could potentially have these signs. As unattractive as the current signs are, electronic signs would be more unattractive. Nobody *needs* the signs. A lot of people would probably *like* to have them. They are easier than getting on a ladder for changeable copy. Once your competitor has one, then you are at a competitive disadvantage.

Karen Alexander is against allowing electronic signs at this time. We are so close to having information from the government study that it would behoove us to wait. During that time we might avoid that very ugly LED signage that is red and maybe other signage or technology in the future would not be dissimilar to a white vinyl sign that could have changeable copy. One of our colleges is on the interstate; one is in a residential area, and one in a historic district. We have to be very careful about what we allow, because it is going to be impossible to fix once they are allowed. Commercial entities will want these and it could create a situation that we are going to be very unhappy with. We should wait and avoid some problems. Not only do aesthetics matter to the City of Salisbury, but also the safety of our citizens.



A Community Appearance Committee member told of coming through a community near Raleigh that did not allow electronic signs and yet all normal development was still doing business off the interstate. We cannot use that the lack of electronic signs is somehow going to damage the ability of business people to do business. Companies will comply. We do not have to lower standards to bring business to Salisbury. Karen also recommended that the entire Planning Board see the video presented to the committee.

Jeff Smith was on the original committee several years ago. He supported electronic signs then, as he does now. Electronic signs are currently allowed for time and temperature every 30 seconds and allowed for gas prices. The reason two-minute timing had been established was to take safety off the table as a concern; there was no flashing, scrolling, twirling, etc. allowed, because safety was a consideration as well as aesthetics.

Mr. Smith still believes "we have a problem" regarding the allowance of time and temperature and not allowing the colleges or businesses to use the same technology. The red lights could be eliminated. He does not believe that, once allowed, they would completely flood the city. The fabric of the city will not unravel because a "certain square footage" is allowed to be electronic. Allowing the new technology would move the city forward. Planning Board could come up with a way to make this viable; write an ordinance where they can be used and not destroy the aesthetic quality of the city. Mr. Smith stated that the requests for electronic signage have come from *local* business owners and institutions.

Diane Young remembered the period when the sign ordinance was created, and there was a fear that business in Salisbury would suffer. Sometimes we wrestle with things like the safety issue. We are fortunate to have the luxury of some good studies coming. It would be better to wait and make a sound decision. There would be a more significant problem if the people get on the early bandwagon and then the city reverses their decision after the study. Some would have a competitive edge then.

Those in favor of the recommendation (Committee 3-1) to table action on amending the ordinance until after the 2009 Federal Highway Administration and AASHTO independent studies are complete were Albert Stout, Valerie Stewart, Diane Young, Karen Alexander, and Richard Huffman. Those opposed to the recommendation were Jeff Smith, Craig Neuhardt, and Robert Cockerl. (Planning Board 5-3) This recommendation to take no action at this time will proceed to City Council.

## OTHER BOARD BUSINESS

The next meeting will be January 8, 2008.

There being no further business to come before the Planning Board, the meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Happy holidays!



Dr. Mark Beymer, Chair



Diane Young, Vice Chair



Secretary, Diana Moghrabi